

Message Text

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46

ACTION SCCT-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 SY-05 AID-05 SSO-00

NSCE-00 INRE-00 SAM-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USSH-00 FBIE-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 DHA-02 /080 W

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O 071330Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5148

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA IMMEDIATE

USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

CINCEUR IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, LE

SUBJ: PRESS COVERAGE OF COLONEL MORGAN'S ABDUCTION

REF: BEIRUT 8489, BEIRUT 8491

1. FOLLOWING DAY OF QUIET, IN WHICH ONLY SIGNIFICANT COVERAGE OF COLONEL MORGAN'S ABDUCTION WAS LONG ARTICLE IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE "DAILY STAR" AND ONE Q&A AT NEWS CONFERENCE BY PRIME MINISTER KARAME, PRESS INTEREST DRAMATICALLY REKINDLED EVENING OF JULY 6 BY AFP ANNOUNCEMENT THAT IT HAD RECEIVED AND TRANSMITTED TO AMEMBASSY LETTER, TAPES, AND PHOTOS RELATED TO COLONEL MORGAN.

2. IN RESPONDING TO FLOOD OF PRESS INQUIRIES, EMBASSY HAS CONFINED ITSELF TO CONFIRMING THAT IT HAS RECEIVED THROUGH AFP A LETTER, TWO B&W PHOTOS, THREE COLOR PHOTOS, AND TWO TAPES CONTAINING THREE MESSAGES, THAT AN ACQUAINTANCE OF COLONEL MORGAN HAS HEARD TAPES AND INSPECTED PHOTOS, THAT EMBASSY IS SATISFIED THAT TAPES AND PHOTOS ARE INDEED THOSE OF COLONEL MORGAN, AND THAT IT IS IN TOUCH WITH APPROPRIATE LEBANESE AUTHORITIES ON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MATTER. EMBASSY HAS REFUSED COMMENT ON POSSIBLE AUTHORSHIP

OR CONTENTS OF LETTER, ON CONTENTS OF TAPES, AND ON DETAILS OF ITS ACTIVITIES AND CONTACTS WITH GOL SINCE THEIR RECEIPT.

3. FYI, AFP RETAINED COPIES OF LETTER AND TAPES, AS WELL AS THIRD B&W PHOTO. IT HAS ALREADY RELEASED TEXT OF LETTER AND EXCERPTS OF TAPES AND WILL PRESUMABLY RELEASE COPIES OF PHOTO. FOLLOWING AFP "SCOOP", AMERICAN NETWORKS AND AGENCIES ARE UNDERSTANDABLY ANXIOUS TO OBTAIN COPIES OF TAPES AND PHOTOS AND ARE PRESSING EMBASSY STRONGLY TO RELEASE THEM. EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE ON PROPRIETY OF SUCH RELEASE.

4. FYI, JULY 6 "DAILY STAR" SAID IN PART QUOTE ACCORDING TO SOURCES CLOSE TO TAXI DRIVER WHO TOOK COLONEL TO AND FROM AIRPORT... ALL THAT DRIVER COULD SAY ABOUT ARMED MEN WERE THAT THEY WERE LEBANESE. INNER QUOTE ONE CAN TELL IMMEDIATELY BY ACCENT IF THEY ARE PALESTINIAN OR NOT -- AND THEY WERE NOT END INNER QUOTE HE SAID. SOURCE ALSO SAID THAT THIS HAPPENED IN FULL VIEW OF LEBANESE SECURITY FORCES WHO WERE STATIONED AT CHIAH ROUNDABOUT.... THESE REPORTS INDICATE TO MANY LOCAL OBSERVERS HERE THAT THERE IS STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT ARMED MEN MAY HAVE BEEN COMMANDOS REPRESENTING SOME GROUP OF LEBANESE LEFT.... LOCAL OBSERVERS HERE SPECULATETHAT IF INDEED MISSING COLONEL

HAS FALLEN INTO HANDS OF LEFTIST COMMANDOS THIS WOULD PROVE STICKY PROBLEM FOR NEWLY APPOINTED AND CONTROVERSIAL MINISTER OF INTERIOR, CAMILLE CHAMOUN. CHAMOUN, A MARONITE, IS ALSO HEAD OF NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY AND CLOSE ALLY OF RIGHT-WING PHALANGIST PARTY. HIS APPOINTMENT HAS CAUSED CONSIDERABLE CRITICISM FROM LEFTIST AND MOSLEM ELEMENTS IN COUNTRY. END QUOTE.

5. PRIME MINISTER RACHID KARAME, ASKED AT NEWS CONFERENCE ABOUT MORGAN, REPLIED THAT HE REGRETTED KIDNAPPING OPERATIONS, QUOTE WHICH WE CONSIDER AS ALIEN TO OUR SOCIETY, UNACCEPTABLE, AND SHAMEFUL. IN ANY CASE, WE ARE MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO SEEK RELEASE OF ALL DETAINEES AND KIDNAPEES, INCLUDING AMERICAN COLONEL, AND WE HOPE WE WILL BE SUCCESSFUL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNQUOTE.

6. JULY 7 PAPERS BANNER NEWS OF KIDNAPPERS' LETTER, TAPES, AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PHOTOS AND QUOTE EXTENSIVELY FROM AFP VERSION OF LETTER AND TAPES.

7. ON IDENTITY OF "REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST ACTION ORGANIZATION" WHICH SIGNED LETTER, INDEPENDENT "L'ORIENT-LE JOUR" STATES WITHOUT FURTHER ELUCIDATION THAT THIS ORGANIZATION HAD DRAWN ATTENTION TO ITSELF IN KUWAIT SEVERAL MONTHS AGO. HOWEVER, LEADING LEFTIST PRO-PLO "AL-MUHARRIR", LEADING INDEPENDENT

"AN-NAHAR", AND INDEPENDENT

"AL-BAYRAQ" ALL NOTE THAT THIS IS FIRST TIME ORGANIZATION BY THIS NAME HAS BEEN MENTIONED. "AN-NAHAR" ALSO MAKES FOLLOWING "OBSERVATIONS": (A) KIDNAPPERS GAVE THEIR DEMANDS POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONTENT REMINISCENT OF TUPAMAROS; (B) DEMANDS THEMSELVES ARE NOT IMPOSSIBLE, BUT CAN BE FULFILLED; (C) FULFILLMENT OF DEMANDS DOES NOT NECESSARILY REQUIRE PRESENCE OF PERSON FROM ORGANIZATION AT POINT OF DELIVERY, SINCE LETTER REQUESTS DELIVERY TO POPULAR COMMITTEE OF MASLAKH (KARANTINA) QUARTER; (D) KIDNAPPERS' SELECTION OF MASLAKH QUARTER MAY BE SIGNIFICANT.

8. ON CONTINUING EFFORTS TO OBTAIN MORGAN'S RELEASE, "AN-NAHAR" REPORTS THAT, ON LEBANESE LEVEL, PRIME MINISTER KARAME, INTERIOR MINISTER CHAMOUN, AND FONMIN TAKLA HAS BEEN INFORMED OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED, THAT COMPETENT LEBANESE AUTHORITIES HAVE BEGUN THEIR INVESTIGATIONS AND CONTACTS, BUT THAT OFFICIAL SOURCES REFUSE TO COMMENT OR REVEAL ANY DETAILS. ON PALESTINIAN LEVEL, "AN-NAHAR" REPORTS THAT SECURITY ORGANS OF PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE HAVE BEGUN TO INVESTIGATE AFFAIR AND TO UNDERTAKE NECESSARY CONTACTS. INFORMED PALESTINIAN SOURCES SAY THAT THREE DAYS AGO THERE WERE LEBANESE CONTACTS WITH SOME RESISTANCE OFFICIALS TO HELP IN FINDING KIDNAPPED COLONEL. RESISTANCE SECURITY SOURCES REFUSE TO SAY WHETHER THEY HAVE ANY LEADS OR NOT.

9. CONSERVATIVE -AL-HAYAT" AND "DAILY STAR" SIMILARLY REPORT THAT QUOTE INTERIOR MINISTER CAMILLE CHAMOUN REQUESTED SECURITY AUTHORITIES UNDERTAKE URGENT AND WIDE-RANGING INVESTIGATION TO DISCOVER IDENTITY OF INNER QUOTE REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST ACTION ORGANIZATION END INNER QUOTE. HE SAID LATE LAST NIGHT THAT AUTHRORITIES REJECT ORGANIZATION'S CONDITION CALLING ON LEBANESE SECURITY AUTHORITIES TO STOP SEARCHING FOR COLONEL MORGAN. END QUOTE.

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